Maharshi Dayananda on *Niyoga* A few Important Hints

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Before commenting and criticizing Maharshi Dayananda for his views on Niyoga etc. one is expected to consider at least the following inter-connected facts:

1. Swami Dayananda has defined the most ancient Vedic social system in which all the four classes (four varnas viz. Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya & Shoodra) are determined according to merits and actions of the individuals (and not based on birth) at the age of the 16th year of girls and 25th year of boys, by the competent authorities viz. preceptors or *acharyas* of the *Gurukulas* - the educational institutions, etc.

2. Swami Dayananda has presented a system of education in which *Gurukula* (residential seminary type) education is compulsory for all, including the children of the Shoodra class. In this education system top most priority is given to *Brahmacharya* (self-restraint or celibacy).

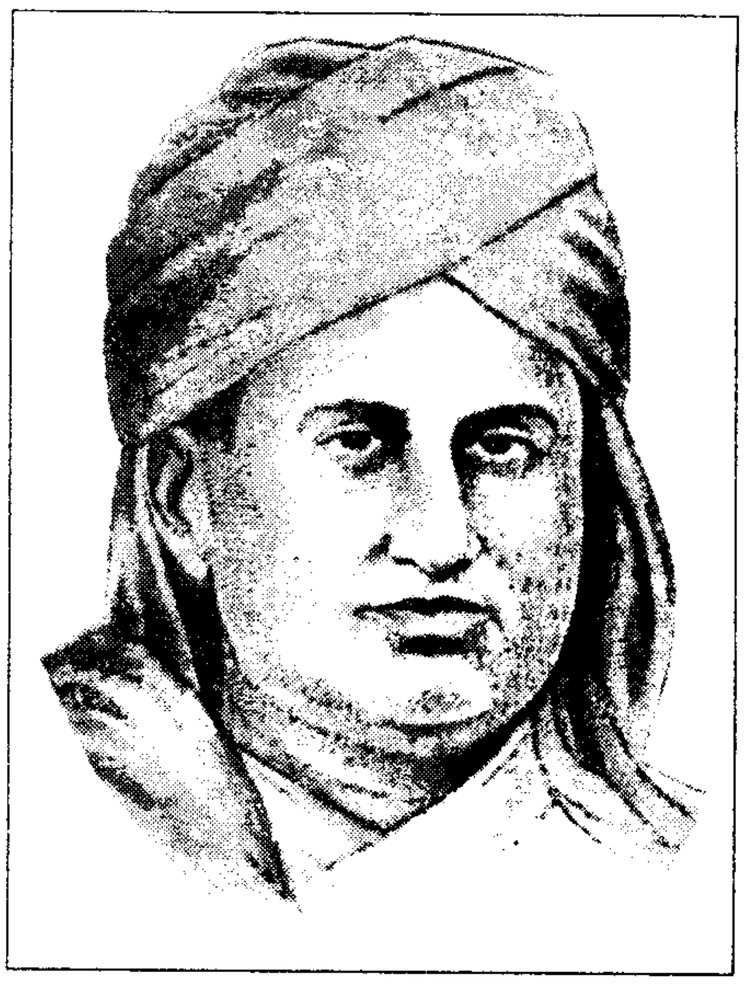
3. According to Swami Dayananda human life can be prolonged even up to 300-400 years. The Vedas also indicate such prolonged human life. Along with so many other essential factors like appropriate diet, physical exercise etc., Brahmacharya (celibacy) and meditation etc. should be strictly practiced to enjoy such longevity. Based on this, as well as evidences of the ancient scriptures viz. Upanishads and Ayurveda etc., Swami Dayananda has recommended the marriage ages for boys and girls in his books.

4. Only for those students who intend to get married after completion of the study of all the four Vedas, Swami Dayananda has ordained that they should get married at the age of 48. There also he has quoted Chhandogya Upanishad and Sushrut in support of what he has written there in the third chapter of Satyarth-Prakash. Based on the different periods of Brahmacharya (celibacy), he has given various options of the marriage age starting from 25 to 48 in case of male students and 16 to 24 in case of girl students. However, nowhere any compulsions have been stated in the matter. Life-long brahmacharya (unmarried life) was the Vedic ideal, though it has been very difficult for the ordinary persons. Only a very few deserving persons may opt for that most difficult mission of life-long celibacy.

5. In the Vedic system even married life itself was only for a few years - being just a transitional period between Brahmacharya and Vaanaprashtha or *Sannyasa*. The married life was considered as a preparatory phase of next higher orders of Vaanaprashtha and Sannyasa means renunciation - freedom from passions, attachments and worldly pleasures.

6. In the era of child-marriages, it was Swami Dayananda who fought for marriage at the right and mature age and endeavored to awaken our society.

7. Moreover, one would surprise to note that Swami Dayananda has



Maharshi Dayananda

mentioned in the very beginning of the fourth chapter of his Satyarth-Prakash, which treats "Marriage and Married Life", that only that student who has not violated his vows of Brahmacharya (celibacy), and has conducted himself righteously according to the advice of his preceptor, and has studied minimum one Veda, is entitled for marriage. He has written this based on Manusmriti: 3.2. This is the criterion Swami Dayananda and Maharshi Manu have set as a prerequisite or minimum qualification for entering in to the married life. Only such highly cultured and educated married persons are expected to honour and comply with the social regulations meant for executing Niyoga.

8. As stated above, even marriage is not mandatory for all. If a person

(man as well as woman) is convinced that he or she would be capable to keep the vow of Brahmacharya (celibacy) all along and firmly determined to dedicate the whole life to the pursuit of spiritual knowledge, spread of knowledge and righteousness, practicing science of God-realization, etc., he or she is advised not to enter in the married life.

9. Swami Dayananda like our other ancient Vedic seers and law-givers like Manu strictly believed that the basic purpose of marriage is procreation, and not any unchecked sensual gratification. Excessive or unrestrained sensual gratification between wife and husband is also viewed as something avoidable. It is considered as a form of adultery and a lapse from the duty of a householder. How many children are to be reproduced - one or two or up to maximum 10, this also depends solely upon individual, social or national needs.

10. Swami Dayananda has defined Niyoga thus: "Niyoga is the temporary union of a person with another of the opposite sex, both parties may belong to the same class or the male may belong to a class higher, for the raising of issue, when marriage has failed to fulfill its legitimate purpose. It is resorted to in extreme cases, either on the death of one's consort, or when protracted disease has destroyed reproductive power in the husband or in the wife" (Ref: Statement of My Beliefs and Disbeliefs, appendix to Satyarth-Prakash, Sr. no. 47) This definition should be kept in mind while analyzing Swami Dayananda's thoughts on Niyoga.

11. Niyoga is also not mandatory. It is done only to get an issue, if someone desires for it, based on the legitimate reasons. If the concerned person (man or woman) doesn't wish to have an issue, no one would force him or her to go for Niyoga. Swami Dayananda has given top priority to Brahmacharya (celibacy). If a person (man or woman) decides to observe Brahmacharya (self-control) and / or to adopt someone's child and abstain from Niyoga, it is viewed preferable.

12. As marriage is regulated by laws so is the case with Niyoga also. Scientifically we all know the simple fact that for the generation of a new child, union of reproductive elements of a male and a female is an obligatory requirement. Marriage is the most socially acknowledged system to facilitate this. However for any reasons, if the marriage fails to deliver the goods, and a child or more children are required to meet the need of an individual or society or nation, there ought to have some viable alternatives available. The Niyoga system was such a Vedic alternative to cope such crisis and contingencies. Swami Dayananda thought it essential to mention, explain and redefine it in his books, as he comprehended it, so that the social scientists and other sensible persons of the world could explore its validity and propriety as an alternative means to meet the demand of the human society during crisis.

13. It would be a great mistake to suppose that Swami Dayananda was the originator of this system of Niyoga. He has just presented it in our times based on the Vedas and Vedic scriptures and ancient tradition of the Aryas. He was well aware of the critical and delicate nature of this issue and therefore he has taken utmost care in presenting it in his various books and lectures. He has tried his level best to explain it in such a way that the most probable queries could be solved in advance. That is why he has described this issue with various questions and answers in the Satyarth-Prakash. Still if anything is found lacking in his treatment of the subject, the sensible readers are expected to take and understand it in light of the spirit and purpose of the great *Sannyasi* author.

14. We, the members of Arya Samaj, do also believe that the current way of living or life style of the majority of people in the world is not conducive to observance of the Brahmacharya or self-restraint. On the contrary, the air of Western materialistic way of living is getting hold on the minds of the people. There is no Vedic ruler existing anywhere. Under such circumstances the practice of Niyoga is obviously not workable in the society. It works legitimately only when other basic essential social regulations and rule of the land in accordance with the Vedic political philosophy are there and all other ancillary requirements are duly fulfilled including Vedic system of education and citizens with the noble character and high moral values.

15. Swami Dayananda should at least be praised by his critics for his boldness and sincerity to put forward this most ancient Vedic method of social utility and value in this so anomalous era of ours. It appears that if the problems of barrenness, impotency and infertility keep on rising in times to come, the subject of Niyoga would definitely draw attention of the great minds of the world.

16. Along with Niyoga, let me include one more point here: Swami Dayananda Saraswati has explained in his books the process through which the wife is impregnated by his lawful husband. It is questioned since then by some of his adversaries that how the Swami himself being a recluse and celibate, could and should write such a thing. Here I would like to submit as follows:

17. Swami Dayananda was a multi-faceted personality wedded with the zeal of a social reformer. He visualized a society fully developed in all aspects and governed by the Vedic high ideals and practices. That is why he attached the highest importance to the elevation of human race and in doing so it is obvious that the issue of impregnation could not be overlooked. So he gave it due importance. If we aspire for a highly

developed and cultured human society, we have to ensure that from the very foundation of the life of a newcomer all essential care and precautions are observed; then only further desired progress and development could be anticipated. Therefore, the brief elucidation of the scientific procedure for impregnation carried out by the legitimate partners i.e. husband and wife with the sole objective of anticipating a new member of the human family should not be viewed as something obnoxious, hateful or disgusting. We all have been here on this mother earth through such process only. The Vedas are the repository of all true knowledge, and as believed in the Indian tradition the knowledge contained in the Vedas is Divine means God-revealed. Therefore, even in the Vedas (e.g. 14th Volume of Atharva-Veda) we see the verses in which the process of reproduction has been hinted. In Aitarey Upanishad (2.1), Ayurveda (Charak-Sushrut Samhitas, Shareera-shastra) and other ancient Sanskrit books this subject has been dealt with. Even in the modern medical science this has been an integral and most important part of the curriculum. Swami Dayananda has just followed our ancient Vedic tradition. For the betterment of the human race he thought it imperative to present a brief outline of this process as given in the Vedas and books of great seers of yore, in very well-thought and balanced words. Whatever he has written on the subject has been written as a part and parcel of the Vedic sacrament of Garbhaadhaan - Impregnation, the very first sacrament among the 16 famous Vedic sacraments. So targeting Swami Dayananda on such an issue is not at all reasonable.

18. It is obvious and very imperative that the discussion on such issues demands from all of us certain social discipline and restraint.

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India's First Sanskrit Animation Film

Ravi Shankar, an HR consultant from Infosys, had no idea about Sanskrit two years ago. But today, he is making an entire Sanskrit animation film, probably the first of its kind in India.

A 10-week long Spoken Sanskrit course organised by Infosys gave a new goal to Shankar, who was always keen on writing stories. He has written several books on short stories which he gives to charity.

A short book on folk songs inspired this multimedia expert to convert it into a Sanskrit animation film. And there was no looking back.

"I thought how to frugal make animation and convey the stories in an interesting way. As Sanskrit is not a very popular language and not many people know how to speak it, I thought that most people would not risk doing a project like this. The challenge inspired me to take the initiative further and that is how Punyakoti came into the picture," says Shankar.

But a mere idea was not enough to bring this ambitious project to life. Shankar required animators and production houses to support the initiative. And since it was a unique concept, no single studio was ready to take it up. Shankar then thought of doing the entire project on a freelance basis. He got 30 animators on board, who are now doing three minutes of animation each.

The story portrays man-animal conflict beautifully and shows how nature re-establishes itself. Punyakoti, the holy cow who is the central character of the story, takes the viewers on a journey of good and evil. We learn how man's greed is destroying nature and how we can save it.

Though an animation film, Punyakoti is not just restricted to a children audience. The film has been made in a way that adults can relate to it too.

Having initially started with pitching in his personal money and with some help from friends and family, Shankar's project was then supported by donations.

Punyakoti's core team of six members include some renowned names like Ilaiyaraaja who is giving music in the film.

Rakesh P Nair, designer of 2014 National Games mascot Ammu; Anvar Ali, renowned children's writer and poet from Kerala and Manoj Kannoth, the National Award-winning editor of Veettilekkulla Vazhi, are also helping Shankar in his ambitious project. Various Sanskrit scholars are helping Shankar with the language.

The movie is still work-in-progress and will be finished by 2016. The updates of the movie can be seen on their website.

The 100-minute film with 12 characters will need Rs. 5 crore to be made and the team is raising funds through crowd sourcing.

The movie will be released digitally but Shankar is open to all kinds of platforms, including broadcast and multimedia.